

Your turkey & chicken update

from RSPCA Assured



Welcome

Welcome to the very first RSPCA Assured Turkey & Chicken e-newsletter. Hopefully, you will find it not only interesting but also useful. I would love to hear your good news stories, awards you have been nominated for, personal and business achievements. This is your opportunity, as well as ours, to share information, photos, thoughts, and ideas, as well as standards updates and pertinent industry news.

A message from Joe Bailey - Head of Farming



Joe began her career with the RSPCA as an Inspector back in 1994. Since then, she has worked as a Trading Standards Animal Health and Welfare Inspector, Livestock Technical Manager for NSF and Farm Community Network Ambassador. She is also a Nuffield Farming Scholar.

Joe attends and speaks at events, conferences, industry and government meetings and is a well-regarded figure in the industry. In 2017, Joe was awarded the CharityComms inspiring communicator award.

It is RSPCA Assured's 25th anniversary this year and coincidentally, it is my 25th anniversary in the world of welfare! In the last few years, I have become interested in the correlation between animal welfare and human well-being. Increasingly we are all beginning to understand the connection between animal health, welfare, and productivity to human health and well-being. Farming has its fair share of triumphs and traumas. The latter of which can be completely out of our control - The weather, Brexit, Anti-farming activism and of course the continuous threat of diseases, all of which can induce anxiety and stress.

I am proud to be a Farming Community Network (FCN), Ambassador. FCN does an incredible job to support the farming community at times of need. I have also recently undertaken a 2-day Mental Health First Aid course which I would highly recommend.

Our mental health and that of our colleagues and staff are just as important as our physical health. There are many ways in which we can reduce stress, personally, I love walking, wombling (walking and collecting then binning others rubbish!) and running in the fresh air. The endorphins flow and I feel great! I highly recommend these stress-busting activities and although we are all busy bees, we really should take the time to look after our own wellbeing and that of those around us. Talking of bees.... I also have a small bee hotel in my garden, which has brought many smiles to my face watching the lovely leaf cutters stuff their assorted leaves into the little holes-word of advice though, don't try and help its not appreciated!

I would be really interested in knowing what you, your colleagues or staff do to relieve stress and make the working environment more enjoyable. Mental well being can be improved by giving to others, and I know many of you donate to charities. Don't be shy, share these worthy endeavors-especially if you have run a marathon, climbed a mountain or swam the channel, and we can all celebrate, likewise with any awards you have been nominated for or won.

Not long now to EPIC, hope to see you there.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter. Please send in your thoughts and contributions for the next edition in December. Have a lovely Autumn. Please feel free to contact me at any time.

Tel: 07717 722045

My Time with RSPCA Assured.

By Mark Gorton, TNP

When the RSPCA first launched their chicken growing scheme it was like a match made in heaven for us!! Ever since we grew our first birds over 30 years ago our ethos has always been to provide them with everything they needed for a good and healthy life and this is exactly what the Freedom Food Scheme, as it was at the time, was all about. To us it seemed obvious that birds should be free-range, have natural light and houses should be equipped with things to amuse them and perches to perch on – after all, isn't that what birds do?

On the back of this ethos, we have been able to supply an ever-increasing demand for chickens and turkeys that are reared to the highest possible welfare standards. The RSPCA Assured scheme has other advantages to us as a business other than the obvious benefits to the birds. Our farm staff love being on the farms as everything is a lot calmer, the birds are not under any stress and the environment they live in is great to work in. Some of our farmers tell me that they can actually relate to the birds and even get to know some of the individual characters as they grow.

The cover strips that we plant on the ranges to give the birds somewhere else to roam when they are outside also have the added benefit of attracting lots of insects and wildlife. In the summer months watching the swallows swooping down and feeding over

the strips and the singing skylarks flying high in the sky has to be a match made in heaven!



Xenia Kingsley Marketing Manager

Xenia is responsible for consumer marketing. This includes planning television advertising; event catering partnerships; Google Adwords; campaign implementation and supplier management.

Prior to joining RSPCA Assured, Xenia's career background was in PR and marketing. She holds a degree in Marketing Food and Drink.

Poultry marketing update

By Xenia Kingsley, Marketing Manager

We regularly advertise higher welfare chicken and turkey throughout the year on social media and other marketing channels such as podcasts. However, as you may know, we also run a seasonal marketing calendar. This means that we invest in key peaks around big food events such as pancake day, summer barbeques, Great British Bake Off and Christmas.

For poultry, our biggest events are the summer barbeque season and of course, Christmas. We use these events as a hook for promoting higher welfare, RSPCA Assured chicken and turkey, as sales typically peak during these periods.

This year, we invested approximately £50,000 in promoting chicken with BBQ recipes, TV ads and promoted social media posts. We have also budgeted around £50,000 for the promotion of turkey over the festive season, which includes the creation of a new Christmas TV advert, running that advert during peak slots, and promoting turkey on

social media.

Don't forget to tag us on social media if you post about any poultry product deals and offers, so we can share them with our followers. And if you have any exciting food photos please do send them across. We'd love to help promote them on our website and social media - we are @rspcaassured on Twitter and @rspcaassured_official on Instagram.

Email us at hello@rspcaassured.org.uk



Kate Parkes

Senior Scientific Officer - RSPCA

Kate has worked in the RSPCA Farm Animals Department for nearly 14 years, previously working as a Scientific Officer for another UK animal welfare charity.

Kate specialises in pig production and welfare and is responsible for the on-going development of the RSPCA's welfare standards for pigs, which are used by the RSPCA Assured scheme.

Chicken Standards

By Kate Parkes, Senior Scientific Officer - RSPCA

There are no immediate plans to publish a new version of the standards. However,

issues that we continue to discuss with producers on the scheme, including members of our Chicken Standards Technical Advisory Group, include windows, stepped lighting and 360 nipple drinkers. Specifically, we have been looking into what producers on the scheme currently provide, whether any go above the minimum requirements of the standards in these areas and what scope, at some point in the future, there might be for amendments in these areas.

In the coming months, we also plan to look in more detail at the standards in relation to brood and move operations, specifically requirements on the brood unit such as feed and drinker provision, and aspects of transport such as crate height and stocking density. We also continue to monitor developments with respect to Low Atmospheric Pressure Stunning.

Meet the Assessors



Annabelle Heath Assessor

Annabelle assesses pigs, broilers and laying hens and is a member of the Midlands team. Before becoming an assessor, Annabelle was a farm manager for a broiler breeding farm integrated within a large company producing 1.6 million chickens per week.

Annabelle's family own and run a farm that keeps pigs and chickens. In her spare time, she is a keen horse rider.

My background has always been in agriculture and more importantly broilers and layers. My family has an indoor Broiler unit with 120,000 chickens. this is where my interest stemmed from.

My first full time contracted job was as an assistant farm manager on a large broiler breeding rearing unit which I thoroughly enjoyed. This and gave me a huge insight into the broiler industry. Luckily a position came up to manage a broiler breeder farm which was a huge learning curve for me. After working full time in broiler breeding for over 3 years I moved to RSPCA Assured. Since joining RSPCA Assured 2 years ago I have expanded my knowledge within the poultry industry.

I am currently trying to get out and about to meet with a few of the chicken teams in the country and so far I have had a great response from all of them which has been brilliant. I am already seeing the different ways companies operate and how they work with our standards to ensure the chickens are kept to the highest possible level of welfare. I look forward to continuing to meet people on our scheme especially in the chicken industry and look forward to having some good discussions.

Animal bedding - is yours safe and legal?

By Xenia Kingsley, Marketing Manager

How you choose animal bedding material for livestock may depend on many factors such as its cost, absorbency, availability, storage, labour and handling requirements. But do you consider soil health, animal welfare, food safety and if it will produce manure that can be spread to land or composted legally?

Be aware of cheap or free bedding 'products' that contain plastics, treated or painted wood. These materials are not permitted for use as animal bedding or exercise surfaces because of the risks to animals and the human food supply chain.

Spreading this waste to land could be regarded as an illegal waste activity. You could find yourself responsible for the disposal of any waste that doesn't fit the description of the exemption, which could incur expensive landfill fees and possible enforcement action.

In recent years, waste gypsum and plasterboard has been used as bedding material. These materials pose potential risks to animals, humans and the environment from hydrogen sulphide generation. There are no exemptions that allow the use of waste gypsum or waste plasterboard as animal bedding. Any use of these materials without an environmental permit is an offence.



Plastics

By Judy Proctor, National Plastics Strategy Lead, Environment Agency

Everyone's talking about plastics - brought to our attention dramatically through the disturbing images on Blue Planet II and other campaigns. Although we all

need to work together to reduce plastics entering the oceans we also need to increasingly turn our attention to plastics in the freshwater and soil environments.

The sheer amount of plastic used globally as well as low recycling rates and the propensity to litter plastics like food wrappings means that plastics have entered the environment in large quantities.

There is increasing concern about the potential impacts of microplastics in soils, the water environment, on the food chain, human health and animals and plants.

As the Environment Agency, we're keen to play our part in protecting and enhancing soil health. Increasingly we're seeing farmers concerned by plastics contaminating their soils. We see farmers concerned by the sheer amount of plastics they're receiving at their site in various forms of packaging, which they then need to handle and dispose of responsibly, as well as highlighting concern over the plastic content of some of the products, such as composts and digestates spread on their land.



5 Steps You Can Take

- * Check the quality of composts, digestates and other materials before they're spread to your land and be aware of cheap or free bedding 'products' which contain plastics, treated or painted wood. These materials are not permitted for use as animal bedding or exercise surfaces because of the risks to animals and the human food supply chain.
- * Collect plastic wrappings and containers immediately after use to reduce potential contamination and to prevent them from being windblown.
- * Research alternatives to plastic enrichment toys for livestock and take steps to prevent them getting into animal wastes and spread to soils.
- * Request bulk delivery and investigate other means to reduce the amount of plastic you receive on the farm, which you then need to pay to dispose of.
- * Investigate alternative plastic mulches for crops.



Prior to joining RSPCA Assured as Operations Manager, Neil's background was in retail.

As Head of Certification, Neil's responsibilities include working closely with our certifying body to ensure our scheme is industry-leading and translating our strategy into operational procedures and practices that will protect the integrity of our scheme. He also line manages the Operations and Field Assessment Teams.

Certification update - adding value & increasing trust in our logo

By Neil Scott, Head of Certification

We're currently working really hard behind the scenes on a number of exciting projects which have been created to increase the value of our logo to our Membership and build more trust with your consumers. Here are some of the initiatives we are currently working on:

- * A completely new I.T. platform to improve the Member experience, whether that be in applying to join, renewing membership or the assessment process itself

- * Unannounced visits - after receiving feedback from your supply chains, and witnessing the negative PR directed at some assurance schemes recently, we are looking at increasing the number of unannounced visits we currently carry out. A new format for these visits is currently being developed that will allow us to further increase consumer trust in our logo whilst minimising the impact on producers

- * We are about to pilot a new member checker which will enable us to improve the way in which your certificates are issued, as well as making it much simpler for you and your permitted partners to access basic certificate information. We will test this thoroughly before making it available to you.

We will keep you updated on the progress of these initiatives as they develop.

Anti-farming Activist advice

By Joe Bailey, Head of Farming

We are aware of increasing reports of anti-farming activity and understand some of our members may have concerns.

We know that Extinction Rebellion is planning a range of protests from 7th October for a fortnight, it is centered in London but may evolve to other parts of the country.

The NFU has issued some advice which can be viewed via your NFU membership number on this link:

<https://www.nfuonline.com/sectors/poultry/poultry-news/dealing-with-animal-rights-activists-and-extremists/>

If you are not a member of the NFU our advice is:

It isn't easy to remain calm when challenged about farm animals, but instead of becoming defensive, let's try to promote the many positives of rearing livestock to higher welfare standards.

- * Always check the ID of visitors and, and if you think their ID may be fake, call the company they claim to work for.

- * Adhere to the RSPCA Standards - which are mandatory - at all times

- * If you are concerned about your safety, or that of your staff, livestock or property, call the police.

- * Please call us asap

- * Keep calm, keep vigilant and keep safe



Best wishes,

RSPCA Assured

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